

A<sup>2</sup>  
graphite muffle. The graphite muffle 28 preferably comprises at least two and, more preferably, three axial segments because it is difficult to coat sections of the muffle longer than about 40 inches.

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In the Claims

Please amend claims 6 and 11 as follows:

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A<sup>3</sup>  
sub C (Amended) 6. A method for producing a waveguide fiber in a draw furnace including a graphite, generally tubular muffle having an inner surface comprising the steps of:  
providing a high purity silicon carbide coating on the inner surface of the graphite muffle wherein the high purity silicon carbide coating contains less than about 900 parts per billion of impurities and the muffle comprises at least two generally tubular sections;  
disposing waveguide fiber preform in the muffle;  
heating the furnace to a temperature sufficient to draw fiber from the preform; and  
drawing fiber from the preform.

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A<sup>4</sup>  
(Amended) 11. The method of claim 6, wherein the waveguide fiber drawn from the furnace has a point defect loss less than about 1%.

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Please cancel claim 9 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add new claims 12-14 as follows:

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A<sup>5</sup>  
12. The method of claim 6, wherein the high purity silicon carbide coating has a layer thickness of at least two mils.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the high purity silicon carbide coating has a layer thickness of between about 5 and 8 microns.